

WHAT IF THE THERAPIST ASKS ME TO PLAY WITH THEM TOO?

The play therapist may invite you to join in on a session with the child in the playroom. This can be very useful for the child and therapist as well as for the parent. The child is able to share with the parent some of their experiences in the playroom. It is very helpful to meet with the therapist so you can both be working along the same track. Some parents may be concerned that the therapist will judge them negatively and say they are a "bad" parent. A good therapist will help parents with issues they are struggling with. They may also suggest different approaches to working with your child if the current ones aren't working.

AS A PARENT WHAT CAN I DO?

Parent involvement is an important aspect of working with children in play therapy. The therapist may invite you to meet with them for a first meeting and ask you questions about the child's history including pregnancy and birth. You may then be asked to meet with the therapist on a regular basis to check in on how the child is doing at home and to discuss any concerns you may have. You may also be asked to follow through on recommendations and suggestions from the therapist to help your child progress. Therapists encourage parent's input and involvement as they know the parent knows the child best and has the greatest influence on their lives. Feel free to ask questions and express your concerns. You are an important part of helping the therapist help your child.

WHAT IS PLAY THERAPY AND HOW WILL IT HELP MY CHILD?

A parent's guide to play therapy

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Can be reprinted for use with parents and teachers. For more information re: consultations and workshops, please call any of the above therapists at (415) 474-7310

WHAT IS PLAY THERAPY?

Play therapy is a form of helping, usually used with young children. Play is the child's first language. Children are able to express feelings and concerns through the use of different play and art materials that they may not be able to express using words. The trained play therapist provides a safe and contained area for children to express themselves and for the therapist to better understand what will help them.

HOW CAN PLAYING REALLY HELP?

Children begin playing from early infancy. They use play to communicate long before they use language. A trained play therapist can help children put some of their feelings into words. The therapist also helps work through a problem using toys or other play material.

WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH BEHAVIOR?

When children behave badly or strangely they are usually trying to express themselves, their fears, conflicts and concerns. Since they usually cannot tell us with the right words what is bothering them they act it out, often in negative ways.

WHAT HAPPENS IN THE PLAY-ROOM?

The playroom is a safe and consistent place often stocked with many different types of toys, a sand tray and art materials. Children are given the choice of what to play with and how to create the play. Children usually pick out toys that have to do with something in their own lives. The play therapist helps the child through the process of play to feel understood and better able to handle their life experiences. Sometimes the therapist then helps the child(ren) give words to their feelings and learn skills to express the feelings in different and more positive ways.

WHY DOES IT LOOK LIKE THE CHILD IS BEING REWARDED FOR NEGATIVE BEHAVIOR?

It may look like a child is getting a reward for 'acting out' by getting to play in the playroom. Actually working things out in the playroom is how the child can figure out how to solve problems without 'acting out'. Although it is true that the playroom is seen by children as a fun and special place it is also a place where children deal with their problems in a different way.

WILL PLAY THERAPY MAKE MY CHILD BETTER?

Oftentimes children are brought to therapy because they are having difficulties in school or home and parents may be anxious to see them improve. Play therapy can often bring to light emotional problems the child is having. This can cause a child's behavior to temporarily look worse than before. With cooperation from parents and staff the play therapist can help a child's behavior improve over time. Play therapy can last from several weeks to several years depending on the age of the child and the nature of the problem. But as with most complex problems there is usually not a 'quick fix' and both parents and children will need to be patient.